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Title:

Speech at the opening of the Federated Gas Employees' Industrial Union Federal
Council Meeting

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SPEECH BY THE PREMIER, MR. DUNSTAN, AT THE OPENING OF THE FEDERATED
GAS EMPLOYEES' INDUSTRIAL UNION FEDERAL COUNCIL MEETING. 15/11/71.

MR. BAIRD, MR. WILLIAMS, MR. SMITH, DELEGATES:

THANK YOU FOR ASKING ME TO SPEAK AT THIS FEDERAL COUNCIL MEETING.

MAY I FIRST OF ALL EXTEND A SPECIAL WELCOME TO SOUTH AUSTRALIA TO THE
DELEGATES FROM VICTORIA, NEW SOUTH WALES AND TASMANIA.

IT'S A PARTICULAR PLEASURE TO BE ABLE TO SPEAK TO YOU AT A TIME WHEN WE
HAVE A LABOR GOVERNMENT IN THE STATE. MIND YOU, IF THE FORECASTS OF
THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION PROVE AS ACCURATE AS WE BELIEVE THEY WILL,
YOU WILL BE ABLE TO MEET HERE ANY TIME IN THE NEXT COUPLE OF DECADES
AND FIND THE POSITION UNCHANGED. IN FACT HE'S UPPED THE ANTE. THE
LAST TIME I SPOKE TO A UNION FEDERAL CONFERENCE MR. HALL'S PROPHECY -
WHICH WE ARE DETERMINED WILL BE FULFILLED - WAS FOR ONLY 12 YEARS OF
UNINTERRUPTED ALP GOVERNMENT. NOW IT'S TWENTY. HE'S NOT RIGHT, OF
COURSE. THE REAL FIGURE IS 30, BUT IT'S NICE TO SEE THE MESSAGE IS
GETTING THROUGH.

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THERE WILL BE SOME CHANGES NATURALLY. MR. HALL MAY BE OCCUPYING
THE SEAT OF ONE OF THE OTHER PRESENT LIBERALS AFTER THE NEXT ELECTION.
BRIAN SMITH WILL CERTAINLY BE DOING SO.

YOUR MEETING COMES AT A VERY BUSY TIME FOR THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT.
WE'RE NEARING THE END OF ANOTHER MEETING OF PARLIAMENT - ANOTHER
MEETING IN WHICH MEMBERS HAVE BEEN KEPT VERY ACTIVE TRANSLATING INTO
LEGISLATIVE FORM THE PROGRAMME WE PUT BEFORE THE VOTERS AT THE LAST
ELECTION.

IT'S A PROGRAMME OF WHICH WE CAN BE EXTREMELY PROUD. THERE IS STILL MUCH
TO BE DONE. BUT WHAT WE HAVE ATTAINED SO FAR REPRESENTS A PRETTY
SOLID ACHIEVEMENT - PARTICULARLY WHEN ONE CONSIDERS THE LIMITED TIME
WE'VE HAD AND THE OBSTRUCTIONISM WE HAVE MET FROM TIME TO TIME, IN THE
LIBERAL-DOMINATED LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

IN DECIDING ON ITS PROGRAMME THE GOVERNMENT HAS GIVEN PRIORITY TO MEASURES AFFECTING WORKERS AND THEIR FAMILIES. WE DID SO BECAUSE THIS WAS ONE OF THE AREAS IN WHICH ACTION WAS MOST URGENTLY NECESSARY AND WE BELIEVE THE REFORMS WE HAVE ENACTED HAVE SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVED THE LOT OF THE AVERAGE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN.

OUR PROGRAMME IN THE FIELD FALLS INTO TWO DISTINCT CATEGORIES: INDUSTRIAL LEGISLATION AND REGULATIONS AIMED AT IMPROVING CONDITIONS AT WORK AND CONSUMER PROTECTION MEASURES DESIGNED TO PROTECT THE DOLLAR EARNED THERE.

PERHAPS OUR MAJOR ACHIEVEMENT SO FAR HAS BEEN THE NEW WORKMEN'S COMPENSATION ACT. THIS IS NOW IN FORCE, WORKING SMOOTHLY AND EFFICIENTLY AND HAS BECOME, I'M PROUD TO SAY, A MODEL FOR THE REST OF AUSTRALIA TO FOLLOW.

WE HAVE ALSO BEEN ABLE TO SECURE IMPROVEMENT TO THE CONDITIONS OF APPRENTICES IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA, PROVIDING FOR GREATER SUPERVISION TO INCREASE THEIR LEVEL OF TECHNICAL PROFICIENCY AND REDUCING THE MAXIMUM TIME OF INDENTURE FROM FIVE TO FOUR YEARS.

ANOTHER MEASURE WHICH WILL PROVE TO BE AS IMPORTANT IN ITS WAY AS THE COMPENSATION ACT IS THE PROJECTED REVISION OF THE INDUSTRIAL CODE. THIS WILL BE SEPARATED INTO TWO PARTS, ONE DEALING SPECIFICALLY WITH INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND THE INDUSTRIAL COURT IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA AND ONE WITH INDUSTRIAL SAFETY.

INDUSTRIAL SAFETY, PLAINLY, IS AT LEAST AS IMPORTANT AS COMPENSATION. WORKERS HAVE AN ABSOLUTE RIGHT TO THE GREATEST PROTECTION POSSIBLE TO REDUCE THE POSSIBILITY OF ACCIDENTS AT WORK AS WELL AS AN ABSOLUTE RIGHT TO THE MAXIMUM POSSIBLE COMPENSATION SHOULD THEY BE UNFORTUNATE ENOUGH TO BE INVOLVED IN ONE.

THE WHOLE QUESTION OF INDUSTRIAL SAFETY HAS BEEN REFERRED TO A PARLIAMENTARY SELECT COMMITTEE - THE FIRST TIME THIS HAS BEEN DONE HERE SINCE 1892. THE COMMITTEE IS NOW TAKING EVIDENCE FROM INTERESTED PARTIES - AND I HOPE ALL UNIONS WILL DO SO - BEFORE BEGINNING THE TASK OF MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS WHICH WILL BE THE BASIS OF THE NEW LEGISLATION.

OUR AIM IS TO OBTAIN FOR SOUTH AUSTRALIA A COMPREHENSIVE LAW ON INDUSTRIAL SAFETY WHICH WILL BE AS MUCH A GUIDE TO OTHER STATES AS THE COMPENSATION LAW.

SINCE TAKING OFFICE WE HAVE ALSO GAINED CONSIDERABLE IMPROVEMENTS IN THE CONDITION OF DAILY AND WEEKLY PAID GOVERNMENT WORKERS IN THE AREA OF ANNUAL LEAVE, SICK LEAVE AND SERVICE PAY. AS YOU'LL BE AWARE THE DECISION ON GRANTING FOUR WEEKS ANNUAL LEAVE TO DAILY PAID WORKERS AND THEN THIS FOLLOWING ON TO SEMI-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS HAS LED TO SIMILAR BENEFITS FOR YOUR MEMBERS HERE.

THE OTHER FIELD ON WHICH WE'VE CONCENTRATED HAS BEEN THAT OF CONSUMER PROTECTION. IT'S NO USE SECURING EXTRA BENEFITS FOR WORKERS IF THEY AND THEIR FAMILIES CAN BE BILKED OUT OF HARD-EARNED CASH BY UNSCRUPULOUS AND DISHONEST TRADERS.

CONTROLS ARE ESSENTIAL IF THE GENERAL PUBLIC ARE TO BE PUT IN AN EQUAL BARGAINING POSITION AGAINST SOPHISTICATED COMMERCIAL ORGANISATIONS.

TO THIS END WE HAVE GIVEN THE PRICES COMMISSIONER A WHOLE RANGE OF NEW POWERS SO THAT HE CAN ACT AS THE PUBLIC WATCH-DOG - A KIND OF OMBUDSMAN OF THE MARKET PLACE.

AN AMENDMENT TO THE PRICES ACT GIVES HIM POWER TO INVESTIGATE CONSUMER COMPLAINTS AND, IF NECESSARY, TO PROSECUTE ON BEHALF OF THE AGGRIEVED CITIZEN AT STATE EXPENSE. LEGISLATION HAS BEEN APPROVED PROHIBITING FALSE OR MISLEADING ADVERTISING IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA ON PAIN OF SUBSTANTIAL FINES. CONTROLS ON DOOR TO DOOR SELLING ARE BEING TIGHTENED.

PARLIAMENT IS NOW DEBATING NEW CONTROLS ON THE SELLING OF USED CARS AND A BILL WHICH PROVIDES CRIMINAL SANCTIONS IN CASES OF MISREPRESENTATION.

TOGETHER WITH OTHER MEASURES OVERHAULING THE OUTDATED LAW ON JUVENILE OFFENDERS AND PROVIDING FOR PROPER PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT, THIS ADDS UP TO WHAT I BELIEVE, HALF-WAY THROUGH THIS TERM OF OFFICE, TO BE A FINE ACHIEVEMENT AND ONE FOR WHICH WE HAVE SOLID PUBLIC SUPPORT.

IT IS AN INDICATION OF THE KIND OF REFORMS TO WHICH WE CAN LOOK FORWARD WHEN LABOR IS RETURNED TO POWER FEDERALLY AT THE NEXT ELECTION.

LABOR WILL WIN THE ELECTION BECAUSE IT IS THE ONLY PARTY WHICH HAS ARTICULATED AND PLACED BEFORE THE PEOPLE A CO-ORDINATED, COHERENT PROGRAMME OF REFORMS WHICH AUSTRALIANS KNOW TO BE ESSENTIAL AND OVERDUE.

BUT WINNING THAT ELECTION WILL NOT BE EASY. THE PRESENT COALITION IS BARREN OF POLICIES AND BEREFT OF IDEAS. HOWEVER, THEY ARE STILL READY TO PLAY THE POWER GAME TO THE HILT.

THE SIGNS ARE ALL ABOUT US OF WHAT THEIR STRATEGY WILL BE. INCAPABLE OF PRODUCING VIABLE POLICIES TO RIVAL THOSE OF THE ALP THEY WILL SEEK TO EXPLOIT THE INDUSTRIAL SITUATION FOR THE MOST CYNICAL OF MOTIVES. THEY WILL BE QUITE PREPARED TO IGNORE THE FACT THAT THE PUBLIC, THE WORKERS, THE TRADE UNION LEADERSHIP AND THE EMPLOYEES ARE ALL ANXIOUS TO AVOID STRIFE.

THEY WILL GET ROUGH WITH THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT BECAUSE THEY SEE THIS AS THEIR ONLY CHANCE TO RETAIN THEIR TENUOUS HOLD ON OFFICE.

THEY WILL FAIL, OF COURSE, BECAUSE PEOPLE WILL SEE THROUGH SUCH A TRANSPARENT DECEPTION. BUT IT MEANS THAT DURING THE COMING MONTHS THE INDUSTRIAL AND PARLIAMENTARY WINGS OF THE LABOUR MOVEMENT MUST BE ESPECIALLY CAREFUL OF ATTEMPTS TO DRIVE A WEDGE BETWEEN THEM.

AND THEN WHEN WE HAVE LABOR GOVERNMENTS IN THE NATIONAL AS WELL AS THE STATE CAPITALS WE SHALL REALLY BE ABLE TO SET AUSTRALIA TO RIGHTS AGAIN AND PROVIDE FOR PROGRESS, PROSPERITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE IN THE SEVENTIES AND THE EIGHTIES AS WELL.

SIR, AGAIN THANK YOU FOR ASKING ME TODAY. BEFORE CLOSING I'D LIKE TO PAY A SPECIAL TRIBUTE TO MR. K.A. WILLIAMS, WHO WILL BE RETIRING AFTER THIS CONFERENCE HAVING SERVED THE STATE CONTINUOUSLY AS PRESIDENT FOR 26 YEARS - A GREAT RECORD OF WHICH WE CAN ALL BE PROUD.

I'M SURE YOUR DELIBERATIONS WILL BE VALUABLE TO YOURSELVES AND YOUR MEMBERS AND NOW HAVE MUCH PLEASURE IN OFFICIALLY DECLARING IT OPEN.

THANK YOU.
